



Move-In Program at Westfield State University Westfield, Massachusetts

Description of Project

Westfield State University is a public institution located on 256 acres in Westfield, Massachusetts. With an enrollment of approximately 5,700 students, about half of whom live on campus, the university also employs approximately 1,500 people in 24 buildings. Ten of these buildings are residence halls.

In 2007, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) issued a Notice of Noncompliance (NON) to Westfield State for excessive cardboard disposal originating from September move-in activities at campus residence halls. All paper, cardboard and paperboard products (with the exception of certain low-grade materials) are considered violations of the Massachusetts Waste Bans. Though Westfield State managed to remove 3.39 tons of cardboard from the waste stream during move-in day in September 2007, they also collected 4.33 tons of trash. Westfield State administrators felt more cardboard could have been recycled instead of being disposed of as trash.

Cardboard has a high recycling value and as a bulky material it takes up a great deal of space in containers and creates inefficiency by requiring additional hauls of solid waste containers. Following the issue of the NON, MassDEP and representatives from Waste Management (the university's hauler) worked closely with Westfield State to develop a strategy to significantly increase cardboard recycling for move-in activities in 2008.

Move-In Day 2008

Generated 2.5 fewer tons of trash than in previous year.
Recycling rate increased from 44 percent to 55 percent.

For the 2008 move-in, Westfield State staff identified a pool of about 30 students to serve as the "Green Team" and arrive on campus early (Friday) to map out objectives for the move-in Sunday and Monday. Food service staff from Sodexo agreed to feed the students while Waste Management provided two containers for each of the ten residence halls; one container for cardboard and one for solid waste (20 in all). Green Team members created poster-sized signs for each of the containers to serve notice to students (and their parents) of the recycling efforts.

Two Green Team members were staffed at each of the residence halls, spreading the message to students and parents. The combination of messaging and monitoring resulted in great strides toward efficient

Summary

2007 Trash:

4.33 tons

2007 Cardboard:

3.39 tons

2008 Trash:

1.82 tons

2008 Cardboard:

2.23 tons

Recycling Rate Increase 2007-08:

11.2%

2010 Move-In Day Recycling:

5.84 tons

materials management at Westfield State in 2008. Not only did waste generation decrease greatly, by 2.5 tons or nearly 58 percent of the previous year's trash, the cardboard recycling rate also rose from 44 percent to 55 percent. While the tonnage of cardboard collected decreased from the previous year, it should also be noted that Westfield State also encouraged students to apply different principles for packaging and purchasing, resulting in source reduction. Strategies for reuse of cardboard boxes were delivered at orientation and may have helped lead to 3.67 fewer tons of total material removed from Westfield State's residence halls during Move-In 2008.

With recent residence hall expansion to Lansdowne Place in downtown Westfield, total Move-In recycling efforts in 2010 totaled 5.84 tons. Westfield State has continued to employ new strategies over the past two years to divert cardboard and other materials from the waste stream, including single-stream recycling. Staff is also exploring opportunities to create efficiencies during Move-Out weekend in the spring and the school's Sustainability Committee meets regularly to discuss potential initiatives to make Westfield State University a more eco-friendly institution.

Keys to Success

- Cooperation with MassDEP and Waste Management to develop a plan and secure the proper equipment to make recycling work on campus.
- Spreading the message of waste reduction at orientation and during Move-In weekend changes student culture.
- Student-led monitoring efforts, visibility, and communication with peers often have a greater impact than top-down, instructional approaches.

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Additional Internet Resources

- **Massachusetts Waste Bans**
<http://www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/solid/wastebans.htm>
- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) WasteWise Program**
<http://www.epa.gov/wastewise/wrr/rm.htm>

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